

1 **REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF**

2 **CRISTINA FREEMAN**

3 **ON BEHALF OF**

4 **DOMINION ENERGY SOUTH CAROLINA, INC.**

5 **DOCKET NO. 2020-125-E**

6

7 **Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME, BUSINESS ADDRESS, AND CURRENT**
8 **POSITION.**

9 **A.**My name is Cristina Freeman. My business address is 220 Operations
10 Way, Cayce, South Carolina 29033. I am employed by Dominion Energy
11 Southeast Services (“DESS”) as Manager of Customer Assistance for Dominion
12 Energy South Carolina, Inc. (“DESC” or the “Company”).

13 **Q. DESCRIBE YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND BUSINESS**
14 **EXPERIENCE.**

15 **A.**I am a December 1992 graduate of the University of South Carolina
16 (USC-Columbia) where I earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities and
17 Social Sciences, with a major in Spanish and a minor in Business
18 Administration. In April 2005, I joined SCANA Corporation, South Carolina
19 Electric and Gas Company, as a bi-lingual Customer Service Supervisor in the
20 Cayce Contact Center. In September 2014, I was promoted to my current
21 position of Manager, Customer Assistance. In August 2019, I was also given
22 responsibility for the management of our five remaining business office

1 locations located in Columbia, Charleston, Beaufort and Warrentonville. Prior to
2 my employment with Dominion Energy, I was employed by Cooper Power
3 Tools, Inc., Lexington, S.C as an International Customer Service Representative
4 from March 1993- February 1996 at which time I was promoted to bi-lingual
5 Supervisor, International Customer Service Department until my departure April
6 2005. I have over 27 years of Customer Service experience with 18 years in a
7 supervisory role.

8 **Q. PLEASE BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE YOUR DUTIES WITH THE**
9 **COMPANY.**

10 **A.** As a bi-lingual Supervisor, I was responsible for managing a team of 14-
11 16 Customer Service Representatives and supporting daily contact center
12 operations. This included assisting with customer account related inquiries, such
13 as billing, credit action, and service orders for customers in both English and
14 Spanish. In my current role as Manager of Customer Assistance, I have
15 responsibility for the implementation and administration of customer assistance
16 programs designed to assist all customers throughout the Company's service
17 territory, with a primary focus on those that are low-income, persons with
18 disabilities, senior citizens, veterans and households with medical equipment
19 reliant on electricity. I also identify, provide and support opportunities for
20 community engagement through participation in community outreach events and
21 serve as the Special Needs Coordinator as part of the Emergency Recovery Team
22 during major storm events.

1 **Q. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY APPEARED BEFORE THE PUBLIC**
2 **SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA (“COMMISSION”)?**

3 **A.** Yes, I have appeared before the Commission as part of the Inquiry
4 Regarding Bill Round-Up Programs for Jurisdictional Utilities Generic
5 Workshop of the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (ND-2019-4-A)
6 in August 2019. I also appeared in the Actions in Response to COVID-19,
7 Docket No. 2020-106-A, in May 2020.

8 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS**
9 **PROCEEDING?**

10 **A.** The principal purposes of my testimony is to provide, sponsor, and
11 discuss the impactful customer assistance programs, value-added services,
12 energy assistance programs, and community outreach offered by the Company
13 to our most vulnerable customers. The Company’s Customer Assistance team
14 assembled and observed the public night hearings held to date. The Company
15 listened carefully to the testimony from those public night hearings and in the
16 written letters of comment submitted by our customers. Customer Assistance
17 participated nightly in calls with customers to address the needs and questions
18 raised by customers. In most instances, the Company matched several of its
19 existing programs that addressed those customer concerns. Those programs are
20 addressed in my testimony.

21

22

1 **Q. WHAT IS THE COMPANY'S OBJECTIVE IN PROVIDING**
2 **CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS?**

3 **A.** Our continuing objective is to provide support to low-income customers,
4 veterans, senior citizens, customers with disabilities, and households with
5 energy dependent medical equipment. Customer assistance focuses on the most
6 vulnerable customer base and those customers who may be income-eligible for
7 assistance.

8 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW THE COMPANY ACHIEVES THIS**
9 **OBJECTIVE.**

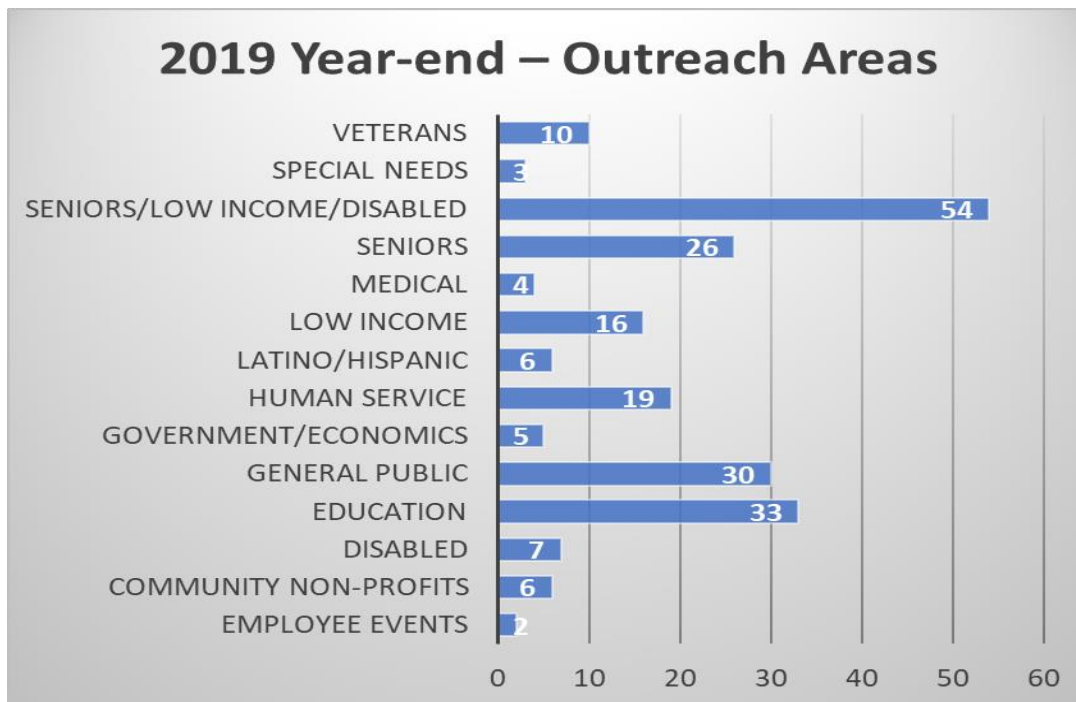
10 **A.** The Company meets this objective through a combination of outreach
11 programs, community partners, direct contact with customers, and various short-
12 term and long-term assistance options to educate customers on the available
13 customer assistance programs for which customers can apply. The Company
14 also connects with customers through in-home visits to discuss customer
15 assistance programs and energy efficiency measures available to the customers.
16 The Company currently accomplishes those efforts virtually in order to provide
17 uninterrupted assistance to our customers.

18 Customer Assistance also connects with customers via local community
19 engagement events that provide energy assistance, educational workshops, and
20 volunteerism. Customer Assistance engaged with over 200 community events
21 in 2019, as outlined in Chart 1:

22

1

Chart 1

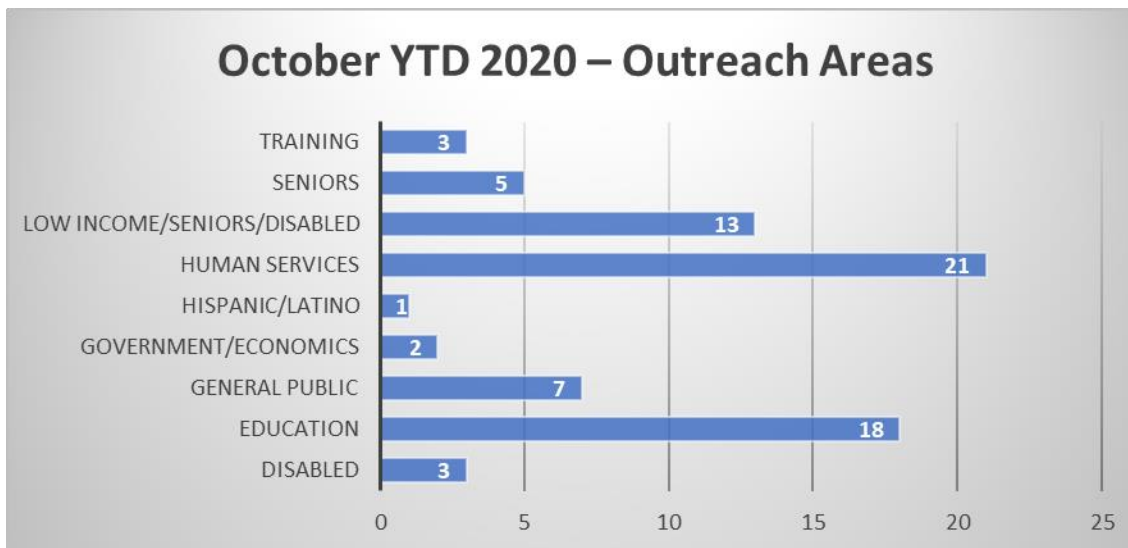


2

3 Customer Assistance outreach in 2020 continues daily, as outlined in Chart 2:

4

Chart 2



5

6

1 **Q. WHAT TYPE OF PROGRAMS DOES THE COMPANY MAKE**
2 **AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED CUSTOMERS?**

3 **A.** The Company offers various customer assistance programs. My
4 testimony discusses eleven of those programs that address questions raised by
5 customers at the night hearings.

6 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY COORDINATE WITH LOCAL RESOURCES**
7 **TO HELP ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS OBTAIN DIRECT BILL**
8 **ASSISTANCE?**

9 **A.** Yes. The Company works to connect eligible customers with community
10 resources that provide direct bill assistance to the customer. The Company
11 utilizes a network of 180 government and private agencies that provide this type
12 of assistance to customers. The Company also advocates at the federal level to
13 ensure vital funding for the continuation of these programs. The Company has
14 strong partnerships with the South Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity and
15 South Carolina Association of Community Action Partnership to help guide
16 customers to available assistance programs.

17 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY OFFER A PROGRAM TO ASSIST ELIGIBLE**
18 **LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS?**

19 **A.** The Company offers the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
20 (LIHEAP). This program provides home energy assistance to help eligible low-
21 income households meet their home heating and/or cooling needs. The
22 customer's Community Action Agency (which can be accessed by the customer

1 at dominionenergysc.com/assistance) may be able to offer the customer
2 assistance through bill payments, energy crisis assistance, and/or weatherization
3 and energy-related home repairs.

4 In 2019, the Company applied over \$9.2M in energy assistance through
5 LIHEAP and other energy assistance funding supporting over 44,300 customer
6 accounts. From January 1, 2020 through October 30, 2020, the Company
7 applied over \$12M in energy assistance through LIHEAP and other energy
8 assistance funding supporting over 52,800 customer accounts.

9 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY HAVE A PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES**
10 **SERVICE ASSISTANCE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE**
11 **CUSTOMERS?**

12 **A.** The Company's EnergyShare program offers this relief. The program
13 provides electric and natural gas service assistance to low-income customers,
14 veterans, customers with disabilities, senior citizens and households with energy
15 dependent medical equipment. This program expanded into South Carolina in
16 May 2020 and replaced the long-standing Project Share Program. The program
17 provides year-round utility assistance for residential customers.

18 The program has been funded by \$750,000 in corporate contributions and
19 \$125,000 from Company employees, retirees, and other Company customers
20 from January 1-November 10, 2020. The program continues to add \$10,000-
21 15,000 in contributions each month.

1 The South Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity administers the aid
2 available to customers in this program. EnergyShare provided assistance to 387
3 households from May through September 2020.

4 **Q. CAN THE ENERGYSHARE PROGRAM BE USED TO SUPPLEMENT**
5 **OTHER CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE?**

6 **A.** It can. EnergyShare assistance can be used to supplement other customer
7 assistance such as the LIHEAP program.

8 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY ASSIST CUSTOMERS WITH NON-UTILITY**
9 **RELATED EXPENSES?**

10 **A.** Yes. Some customers at the night hearing noted the increasing costs of
11 housing costs, food, medical bills, and prescription medicine. The Company
12 employees and retirees created the Good Neighbor Fund Program to provide
13 temporary financial assistance for those non-utility related expenses. The Good
14 Neighbor Fund Program offers financial assistance to customers for
15 rent/mortgage, food, medical bills, prescriptions, clothing, etc.

16 The Good Neighbor Fund Program has been funded and run by company
17 employees and retirees for 38 years. It continues to be supported by over 800
18 employees and retirees today. Assistance is provided through employee and
19 retiree referrals and is available to help anyone in the community. It is not
20 necessary to be a Dominion Energy customer to be eligible for assistance
21 through this program.

1 In 2020, the Good Neighbor Fund received a \$100,000 grant from the
2 Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation in support of this program. It provided
3 assistance to 215 households in 2019 and awarded over \$176,500 in aid. In
4 2020, the Good Neighbor Fund program has provided assistance to 134
5 households and awarded over \$76,580 in aid from January 1 through October
6 31.

7 The Good Neighbor Fund also provides food baskets and toys to families
8 in need during the holiday season. In 2019, 1025 food baskets and over 600 toys
9 were distributed to help those in need during the month of December.

10 **Q. WHAT ASSISTANCE DOES THE COMPANY PROVIDE CUSTOMERS**
11 **UTILIZING IN-HOME ELECTRICAL MEDICAL EQUIPMENT?**

12 **A.** The White Cross program offers assistance to customers who have
13 electrical medical equipment in their home. The Company meets in-home to
14 enroll the customer in the program. Qualifying customers have a white seal
15 placed on the meter to denote participation in the program. The Company
16 proactively communicates with participating customers during times of major
17 storms and offers a dedicated White Cross customer line for communications
18 during major storm events. 5,295 customers participate in White Cross as of
19 September 2020. In addition, for the most vulnerable, the Company offers the
20 White Cross Plus program which offers enhanced services for customers with
21 life threatening situations.



1
2 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY OFFER SOLAR OR OTHER DEMAND-SIDE**
3 **MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS TO CUSTOMERS?**

4 **A.** The Company does offer those programs to customers. The Company
5 offers a Community Solar Select program. Participants of this program may
6 subscribe to panels in a solar array located within the Dominion Energy South
7 Carolina service area and enjoy the benefits of bill credits without paying a
8 subscription fee or having to install panels at their residence. The customer has
9 no responsibility to maintain the solar panels.

10 This program is available to customers who are income-qualified through
11 a Community Action Agency. Once qualified, Energy Information Services
12 contacts the customer to start the enrollment process by scheduling a free home
13 energy check-up normally worth more than \$250. There is no cost to the
14 customer to participate in the program. In fact, the customer earns \$0.01/kWh
15 of energy produced from the customer's assigned panels to be used to offset the
16 customer's monthly bill.

1 A customer can participate in this program regardless of where they live
2 in the Company's service area, and the program is also available even to
3 customers renting their residence.

4 The Company also educates customers on energy efficiency tips and
5 pointers. Those recommendations can be found at [dominionenergysc.com/for-](http://dominionenergysc.com/for-my-home/save-energy-money/home-energy-check-up)
6 my-home/save-energy-money/home-energy-check-up.

7 **Q. WHAT PROGRAMS DOES THE COMPANY OFFER TO ASSIST ITS**
8 **VISUAL OR HEARING IMPAIRED CUSTOMERS?**

9 **A.** The Company provides large print bills for the visually impaired. This
10 free of charge option provides a summary page of the bill in a larger font size in
11 addition to the regular bill.

12 The Company also utilizes Relay South Carolina to provide translator
13 services for hearing and speech impaired customers to communicate by phone
14 with us.

15 **Q. DOES THE COMPANY HAVE A REMINDER PROGRAM TO HELP**
16 **CUSTOMERS STAY CURRENT ON PAYMENTS?**

17 **A.** It does. The Company's voluntary Third-Party Notification program
18 allows for a safety net for all customers. The program is especially beneficial
19 for customers who are elderly, ill, or young adults. Third-party notification is
20 beneficial for customers wanting to keep a family member, friend, or trusted
21 organization aware of their accounts. It allows a contact of the customer's
22 choosing to be notified if account becomes delinquent. The contact has no

1 responsibility for the bill. Over 3,000 customers have participated in this
2 program as of September 2020.

3 **Q. CUSTOMERS AT THE NIGHT HEARING MENTIONED THE**
4 **BUDGET BILLING PROGRAM. CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THAT**
5 **PROGRAM OPERATES?**

6 **A.** The Company offers Budget Billing to qualifying customers interested in
7 receiving a more predictable monthly energy bill. The Budget Billing program
8 may be ideal for customers on fixed incomes. Budget Billing accounts are
9 monitored and reviewed during the 12-month term. At review, the Budget
10 Billing amount may be adjusted if a potential large over payment or under
11 payment is anticipated at anniversary. When an adjustment is made, a letter is
12 mailed to the customer with the new Budget Billing amount effective on the next
13 bill. An anniversary bill generates the last month of the Budget Billing Plan,
14 included is a forecasted Budget Billing Plan amount for the next 12 months
15 based on the total projected budget billing amount. The new Budget Billing
16 amount is determined by the balance, previous 12 months of usage, along with
17 a possible buffer, taxes, weather trends/fluctuations and current rates. The
18 customer may have two options which determines the new Budget Billing Plan
19 amount. The customer may receive an option on the anniversary bill to pay the
20 Budget Billing amount or pay the debit balance. Customer may receive an
21 anniversary option to pay none or pay the last installment of the prior year's

1 Budget Billing Plan before beginning the next month's new Budget Billing Plan
2 amount.

3 **Q. WHAT IS THE COST TO THE CUSTOMER TO PARTICIPATE IN A**
4 **QUALIFIED PROGRAM?**

5 **A.** The customer incurs no cost to receive the benefits of a customer
6 assistance program in which the customer qualifies. The programs offered by
7 the Company are voluntary to enroll and have no penalty should a customer elect
8 to opt-out. The EnergyShare and Good Neighbor Fund customer assistance
9 programs are graciously funded through contributions from our employees,
10 retirees, and shareholder dollars, with the EnergyShare program also receiving
11 additional support through voluntary contributions by other customers.

12 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR REBUTTAL TESTIMONY?**

13 **A.** Yes.